

HIS HIGH HOPES, HIS TRIALS AND HIS FINAL DEFEAT.

When Robert Emmet Smith became proprietor, business manager, editor-in-chief and literary director of the "Pleasanton Banner," which proudly heralded the fact that it was "the official organ of Atascosa County, Texas," he was ambitious. He bought the paper from "Old Man" Curlock, paying him therefor \$50 in cash and a promissory note for \$550 due in twelve months. The "old man" stuffed the money into the deepest corner of a deep trousers pocket, spat into a sawdust-filled box which did duty for a cuspidor, and said: "You'll find the folks at Atascosa easy to get along with if you don't step on their corns. Give 'em plenty of local news and spell the names right. The Sheriff is the best candidate for re-election and 'em a good man. Jim Scruggs is going to run again and he is a good man. You'll get a lot of kind o' Baptists and thirty kinds o' Methodists in this town. You'll have to be keertful. Everybody has got a eye on you. They expect you to write 'em a salutory. Write her. Don't give 'em no editorials but wha-

The day afterward Si Lemmons invaded the sanctum. He walked in as if it belonged to him, and, depositing the customary libations of saliva in the sawdust cuspidor, took a seat on the desk. Si Lemmons was the Sheriff. He was heavily boot-ed and spurred, and a Colt's revolver, single action, nickel plated, .45 calibre, five barrels loaded,

A LURID SHORT STORY.

Reginald passed his hand wearily over his aching brow, and gazed languidly between the purple portières. Within was a chaos of whirling muslin and hungry faces swimming on a sea of passionate, throbbing music. There was a mist before his eyes; grinning heads floated restlessly by; glowering in the shell-like ears of painted women. Amid the fevered maelstrom, a figure loomed larger and closer upon his attention. It was the hostess. A low, hoarse, and creaked his Law! what a squash!" he murmured in her ear, then plunged into the stream, and was borne away to the other side of the room.

He had stood long buried in pensive gloom, sometimes on one leg, sometimes on the other. His hand hung dumb. The room was deserted. The distant howl and clatter told him that the guests were at supper. He gazed moodily round the ghastly emptiness of the apartment. Then, moved by some impulse, he went to his stocks to a corner where a reprieve had been fitted for the paled coyings of those that could dance no more. Within this cavern all was dark. But as he peered into the shade of it he became aware of two green phosphorescent eyes bent upon him from within. He bowed his head resignedly, and knew there was no escape. There was a spell in those lurid eyes he must obey. He sank upon the seat beside her and gazed upon her features. As he got used to the light he became aware that her face was streaked, with an undercurrent of livid pink.

"You are a Basile-k!" he murmured, fingering her throbbing auburn hair.

Dance upon dance they had danced together. At times they sat silent, his hand in hers. The intoxication of the Basile-k had entered into his blood. He thought with a passionate regret of the days of his boyhood. A moment came when her head was turned aside to fling a word to a black-eyed chaperon. He strung his trembling limbs for one last effort, and retired feebly to the door. He yearned for liberty, and returned to find him as in a dream. "We be dancing to-morrow to the dearest of us," she said, tripping across the polished floor, "I am young," and he knew that his opportunity was gone.

It was a waltz. Heilmann and the Redfish danced as wildly as the wildest there. Soddish's face was a mask of mirth and character. Seeing her by the chain he gazed into her eyes, giddy and uncertain. The freckles seemed to chase one another over her cheek. She dragged him down and pressed a dozen warm kisses on his lips. "You are mine! mine!" she almost shrieked. "Give me your name!" Her words were in the air, in the ambient uncertainty; they were in the throng of faded merry-makers, but alone, oh, so alone!

He was standing by the open window with an aimless thing in mind.

"The end of life," she said, "is finding pearls in other people's oysters."

"That is a paradox," he answered.

"Truth is a paradox," said she. He looked inquiringly.

"The Serpent was an Incest!" she replied, with her collected smile.

"The Sea Serpent?" he queried, and the muscles of his neck relaxed a little. Then, hastily, bringing the dewdrop from his brow, "This atmosphere is too rattled for me," he murmured. Again that far-away look in his eyes. He seemed to yearn for a thing forgotten.

Suddenly the thing in manure found that it stood alone. A trodden twig shifted and broke, without in the stifling summer night. She looked into the garden and saw nothing. Only two green stars seemed to glow mostly out of the gloom beneath the privet-bush. Then a whisper passed and died in the treetops, and three green stars were no more. Reginald was gone. He had followed the ballet-eye out into the gloom.

There is a little house with creepers on Clapham Road. The few passengers in the street shrink hurriedly away and pass on. There is no sign of life there. Only sometimes a green gleam from behind the French blinds and the flash of weary knees.

A MORTIFYING REASON

Deacon Melcher was in his hundredth year, and very proud of having lived so long. Indeed, it was said in the family that he was exceedingly prone to cheat on the subject of age, not only from forgetful ness, but from an innocent desire to make the most of a good thing. Some days, when his head was tired he was likely to declare himself a hundred and four-

"I had the whooping-cough, and they wouldn't let me go out!"

DOWN IN GEORGY

From The Cleveland Leader.
 Football's dead in Georgy—
 Hip, hurrah, hooray!
 Football's dead in Georgy—
 At least that's what they say—
 Football's dead in Georgy—
 Cut that flowing hair—
 Football's dead in Georgy—
 But they still have lynchings there!

HER IDENTIFICATION.

"There," she said, as she finally got the check properly indorsed and handed it to the paying teller. "I'd like to have the money, please." The young man scanned it carefully and then looked at her.

"Is there anything wrong with it?" she inquired apprehensively.

"No. I'm sure it's all right. Only we have our



OTTO (WHO HAS JUST BEEN SCOLDED BY HIS MAMMA) TO HIS SISTER: OH, YOUR HUSBAND WILL GET A NICE MOTHER-IN-LAW BY AND BY! (After a pause) BRIDE.

is free-trade editorials. You want to be friendly with the deestrick jedge and the deestrick clerk. They give out the county printin'. Goodby."

Robert Emmet Smith took stock and found that he owned four cases of bourgeois type and a line of advertising types. It was all old. The semi-clocks had been cut down to make comminuted periods. When a proof was taken it was hard to tell an "I" from an "l" or an "e" from a "c." The type was swelled at the bottom, a condition which printers know by a ribald name. There was a Washington handpress, a printer who was sometimes sober and a small boy who was leaching the trade. His office boasted a chair and a battered desk. There was a broken bin of "The Banner," two office desks, a couple of rusty "chases," some wooden quoins, a mallet and a planer, a water bucket and a tin dipper with a small hole in the bottom made up the furniture. There had been a muzzle-loading shotgun, ten gauge and weighing twelve pounds, but Gurluck had taken it away with him. The office was

the hammer resting on the empty barrel, the trigger tied back with a buckskin thong, so that the weapon could be fired merely by lifting the hammer with the thumb, swung far down his right hip. "I see," he said, "that you printed a piece about Jim Sprague—called him 'our popular fellow-citizen.' Jim Sprague is the white-bellied coyote that wants to be Sheriff. I can take a corralled lightning bug of a dark night and throw it into the fire and all you know him. You want to be keefin' to give only the names of good people of this place." Then he stalked out. Smith bought a shotgun.

He portrayed the Sheriff, said he was a man of jovial temper and iron nerve, almost criminally liberal in his personal expenditures, the friend of the widow and fatherless, noted for humanity to his prisoners and the terror of evil-doers from Pleasanton to the Rio Grande. Jim Spriggs called, stopped his paper, took out three stray advertisements, hammered the desk with a hairy paw, told Smith he was a "damned cowardly varmint" and then told him Smith drowned his woe on a badly abused fishing expedition, along with two young men of the village who possessed no social understanding whatever, and were never known to have a dollar. They, at least did not want their names in the paper.

During the ensuing weeks Smith became thin and pale. He was whipped by the Sheriff, and made it a "dog fall" with Jim Scurges. He published the fact that the County Clerk was at a country dance, and that gentleman was supposed to be one of the pillars of the church. He neglected to mention the return of the district Judge. The *Enterprise*, the community paper of Tule Basin, contained no reference to the birth of a ten-pound boy at the home of the principal merchant, "Uncle John Williams," known far and near as the champion farmer of Atascosa County. Left a twenty-six-pound pumpkin on the editorial desk, and not a word was said about it. Miss Cynthia Barnes wrote in one of her sweetest poems that "the silvery moon floats in the ether clear," and the drunken printer made it "the silent moon hoots in the ether cernal." Old Cap'n Williams contributed a thrilling story, for his poems were charged by the grand jury, and the town had a party that day was "chased by the Comanches. All of the different brands of religionists were down on him. Subscriptions fell off. Nobody paid him.

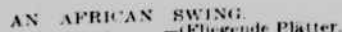
Already the first icy norther of the winter had swept over the shivering land. Then he wrote his valedictory. He had done but one thing of which he was proud, he said. He called attention to the fact that during his incumbency he had put a border around the paper. He walked out of town. The printer went with him. The panes in the office building are broken. Shingles have been torn from its roof. Mosses grow on the walls and the weeds come up to the door. The spring is choked and brackish. The press stands idle in the darkened room. Dust has gathered thickly on the cases. "The Pleasanton Banner," official organ of Atascosa County, Texas, is no more.

NATURALLY INFERRED.

"Maim somebody! What an ideal name for a footballer's sweetheart."

THIS MAY EXPLAIN IT.

"Faith I don't know, unless it's because so many Democrats are Irish."



a two-roomed frame building on the edge of the little town. It was well lighted and the roof leaked. Around it grew large live oak trees, and near it bubbled a cold clear spring. There was a huge fireplace in the front room. The foreman and printer built a roaring fire in it when Smith's first edition had been set up, although the month was August and the flies hummed against the window panes. He explained that it was necessary to keep the forms in front of the blaze and "swell head" the type so that they would print. This was done and a fair impression obtained.

The new editor wrote his salutatory. It was a column and a half long. He told his three hundred subscribers that, although a stranger in a strange land, he was glad to be in their midst; he said that a tariff law was unconstitutional; he



CLERK—SORRY TO SAY, SIR, THERE'S A SADDLE WE CAN'T ACCOUNT FOR. CAN'T FIND OUT WHO IT WAS SENT TO.
EMPLOYER—CHARGE IT ON ALL THE BILLS.—(Punch.)

but that was not often. Usually, though with some regretfulness, he would pin himself down to his measure century.

There was one point on which he was exceedingly sensitive, though he never failed to meet the question in open field, with all a soldier's heroism. I was fatally liable to be touched upon when strangers came to see him, and they came often.

"You've got all your faculties, too!" some one of them would exclaim to the patient centenarian. "That's more than anybody could expect at your age."

"Hear most as well as ever?"

"Just as well."
"Eyes pretty good?"
"I've got my second sight, I'm thankful to say."
"And you've voted for every President since you
twentieth year?"

"Every time but one," the deacon was wont to reply, humbly.

"When was that?"
 "Twas this very year."
 "You stayed away from the polls in your hun-

drink-crazed Indian, who was running amuck. The local papers gave all details, a Coroner's jury found a verdict in accordance with the facts, and the nearest doctor furnished an ironclad certificate of death. Under these circumstances we were content with a rather superficial investigation, and paid the loss.

"Within two months Hensiek walked into the office and tendered the regular semi-annual payment in accordance with his contract with the company. His appearance knocked me into such a state that they had to use brandy to revive me. He was the man I had insured, and there was no doubt about it. I had never saw a more honest-looking person or heard a voice in which you would place more implicit reliance. We simply had to accept his money and charge the amount we had paid out to profit and loss. All efforts to get the widow woman who had personated his widow and beneficiaries were in vain. Two years later his natural death was reported. I attended the funeral to make sure and was settled. The next summer I saw him again in Germany."

"Well, to be honest, I never had the heart to trouble the company about the matter."